

OLIVE. You'll be the first one I call, Vera. (*VERA nods and leaves.*)

MICKEY. (*to OLIVE*) You sure?

OLIVE. I'm sure.

MICKEY. (*loud, to FLORENCE*) Goodnight, Florence. Try to get a good night's sleep. I guarantee you things are going to look a lot brighter in the morning. (*to OLIVE, whispers*) Hide all your belts and plastic bags. (*OLIVE closes the door, looks at FLORENCE, then slowly crosses into the room.*)

OLIVE. Ohh, Florence, Florence, Florence, Florence.

FLORENCE. I know, I know, I know, I know . . . What am I going to do, Olive?

OLIVE. You're going to wash down those pills with some hot black coffee. I'll make it.

FLORENCE. The terrible thing is, I still love him. It's a lousy marriage, but I still love him. I didn't want this divorce.

OLIVE. You want a brownie? A chocolate brownie? It's about three weeks old but I could toast it.

FLORENCE. If Sidney and I break up, I'll be the first one in my family to be divorced.

OLIVE. You told me your mother and father were divorced.

FLORENCE. I mean since them . . . My sister is still married . . . Separated but married.

OLIVE. How about some espresso? With Stella D'Oro cookies?

FLORENCE. How *dare* he treat me like this? How *dare* he? (*In anger, she bangs her fist down on the arm of the chair and suddenly grabs her neck in great pain.*) Oh! Oh, my neck! My neck!

OLIVE. What did you do?

FLORENCE. (*holding her neck*) It's a nerve spasm. I get it in the neck. Oh, God. Oh, God, it hurts.

OLIVE. What can I do?

FLORENCE. A towel. Get me a hot towel. Very hot.

OLIVE. Right. What about some aspirins?

FLORENCE. Aspirin is good . . . And some brandy . . . I can't move my neck.

OLIVE. Hot towel, aspirin and brandy. Anything else?

FLORENCE. Ben-Gay. To rub in after.

OLIVE. Right. (*starts inside*)

FLORENCE. And a scarf. A woolen scarf . . . Cashmere is better if you have one. (*paces, rubbing neck*) I knew something was coming, Olive. I knew we were in trouble. In the middle of the night I'd tiptoe into the bathroom and I would pray, "Please, God, please help me save my marriage. Please, God, tell me what to do. Tell me what I'm doing wrong. Please, God, help me" . . . And then I'd hear Sidney in the bedroom saying, "Please, God, make her shut up. Tell her to be quiet, please, God" . . .

OLIVE. (*comes back in with tray of medicants*) . . . Here. Put the scarf on. Take your aspirins.

FLORENCE. (*sits at table*) I'm not a complainer. I've never once tried to change Sidney . . . He wears a toupee two sizes too big, he looks like an English sheep dog, I never said a word.

OLIVE. Drink them down with brandy.

FLORENCE. Now he's into cowboy boots. Five foot three and a half, he wears cowboy boots. They come up to his knees . . . He looks like he jumped off a hundred foot horse. He's also into languages. He's studying Russian at the New School. Instead of yes, he says, "Da." Everything is "Da."

OLIVE. You're tensing up again, Florence. Stop tensing.

FLORENCE. I'm married to a five foot three inch man with an oversized toupee and boots up to his knees who

walks around saying, "Da," and he walks out on *ME*???

OLIVE. Will you relax!! RELAX, dammit! Your neck feels like Arnold Schwarzenegger.

FLORENCE. Sometimes I think I'm crazy. Sometimes I think I should be put in an institution.

OLIVE. Later, if the massage doesn't work.

FLORENCE. That doesn't smell like Ben-Gay.

OLIVE. (*looks at tube*) You're right. It's toothpaste.

FLORENCE. I don't think this is helping me. (*She wipes off toothpaste with towel.*)

OLIVE. Because you won't relax. Have you always been this tense?

FLORENCE. Since I was a baby. I could chew a thick sirloin steak just with my gums.

OLIVE. Bend over. (*FLORENCE bends over. OLIVE begins to massage up and down her back.*)

FLORENCE. I do terrible things, Olive. I cry. I panic. I get hysterical.

OLIVE. (*still massaging*) If this hurts just tell me because I don't know what the hell I'm doing.

FLORENCE. I take advantage of you, Olive. I abuse our friendship. I know I drive you crazy.

OLIVE. No, you don't.

FLORENCE. Yes, I do.

OLIVE. You don't.

FLORENCE. I do. I see you grit your teeth together when I talk to you. You used to have much longer teeth.

OLIVE. (*stops massaging*) Okay. How does your neck feel?

FLORENCE. Better.

OLIVE. Good.

FLORENCE. But it never lasts long.

OLIVE. Maybe this time.

FLORENCE. No. It just came back. (*She rubs neck again.*)

OLIVE. (*shakes head in despair*) Drink your brandy.

FLORENCE. I don't think I can. It doesn't go down.

OLIVE. I'll get you a plunger . . . Come on, drink the brandy. You'll feel better.

FLORENCE. Thank God the kids are away at summer camp. They'll be spared this until September.

OLIVE. Please drink your brandy.

FLORENCE. I don't want to get divorced, Olive. I don't want to suddenly change my whole life. Talk to me. Tell me what to do.

OLIVE. Alright, alright. First of all, you're going to calm down and relax. Then you and I are going to figure out a whole new life for you.

FLORENCE. Without Sidney? What kind of a life is there without Sidney?

OLIVE. I don't live with Sidney and I'm very happy. You can do it, Florence, believe me.

FLORENCE. Olive, you've been through it yourself. What did you do? How did you get through it?

OLIVE. (*She drinks some brandy.*) I drank for four days and five nights. I couldn't work. I ate a quart of Haagen-Dazs jamocha almond fudge every night. I gained fourteen pounds, seven on each hip. I looked like I was carrying my laundry in my pockets . . . But I got through it.

FLORENCE. And what about Sidney? He's human too. How's he going to get through this?

OLIVE. He's a man. Men have freedom. He can meet women anywhere. *We* have to donate a kidney and hope the man is grateful and single.

FLORENCE. You think Sidney is thinking of other women? At a time like this?

OLIVE. I guarantee you by tomorrow night he'll be at a singles bar sitting on a stool on top of two telephone books.

FLORENCE. You think so? (*She's been playing with her ear. She suddenly starts to make strange noises as she tries to unplug her ear.*)

OLIVE. What's the matter now?

FLORENCE. (*standing*) My ears are closing up. It's a sinus condition. I'm allergic. (*She makes the sinus sound again, then crosses to the open window. OLIVE follows nervously behind.*)

FLORENCE. I'm not going to jump. I just want to breathe. (*She takes deep breaths.*) I was even allergic to perfume. I had to wear Sidney's after shave lotion. Old Spice Menthol . . . I always felt like I just sailed home from Singapore. (*She suddenly bellows like a moose.*)

OLIVE. (*looks dumbfounded*) What are you doing?

FLORENCE. I'm trying to clear my ears. You create a pressure inside and then it opens up. (*She bellows again.*)

OLIVE. Did it open up?

FLORENCE. A little. (*rubs her neck*) I think I strained my throat.

OLIVE. Florence, leave yourself alone. Don't tinker.

FLORENCE. I can't help myself. I drive everyone crazy. A marriage counselor once kicked me out of his office. He wrote on my chart, "Lunatic"! . . . I don't blame Sidney. It's impossible to be married to me.

OLIVE. It takes two to make a lousy marriage.

FLORENCE. What'll I do with the rest of my life, Olive? I have so much of it left. If only I was seventy, seventy-five, I could get through it.

OLIVE. I'll tell you what you're going to do. You're going to start your life over and stand on your own two feet. Be independent!

FLORENCE. You're right.

OLIVE. Of course I am.

FLORENCE. That's what I was before I was married. I was a great bookkeeper. I could have been Price, Waterhouse today. You're right. Go back to work. Be independent. A self-sufficient woman.

OLIVE. You're damn right.

FLORENCE. Maybe I should ask for my old job back.

OLIVE. Why not? Who did you work for?

FLORENCE. Sidney. God, the mistakes I've made. Goddam idiot!! I hate me.

OLIVE. You don't hate you. You love you. You think no one has problems like you.

FLORENCE. You're wrong. I happen to know I hate my guts.

OLIVE. Come on, Florence. I've never seen anyone so in love. If you had two more legs, you'd take yourself out dancing.

FLORENCE. I thought you were my friend.

OLIVE. I am. That's why I can talk to you like this. I love you almost as much as you do.

FLORENCE. Then help me.

OLIVE. How can I help you when I can't help myself? You think you're impossible to live with? I was sloppy since I was a kid. I got married in a white gown with Coca-Cola stains on it . . . My mind is into other things . . . I like to write, I like to paint, I like photography. I *don't* like to clean up. I leave a mess after I read a book.

FLORENCE. I don't do it for myself. I liked Sidney to come home to a clean house. I want my children growing up having respect for things. How else will they learn?

OLIVE. But what's the point of it all? When you're dead, they're going to throw dirt on you anyway.

FLORENCE. If only I could change . . . Maybe I should call Sidney.

OLIVE. What for?

FLORENCE. To talk it out again. Maybe we left something unsaid.

OLIVE. Where's your self-respect? You want to crawl back on your hands and knees?

FLORENCE. He wouldn't notice. He'd think I was scrubbing the floors.

OLIVE. Florence, listen to me . . . Tonight you're going to sleep here. Tomorrow you're going to go home, pack up your sinus medicines and your after shave lotions and move in here with me.

FLORENCE. Won't I be in the way?

OLIVE. Of course you will.

FLORENCE. I'm a pest.

OLIVE. I *know* you're a pest. I was the one who gave you the name.

FLORENCE. Then why do you want me to live with you?

OLIVE. Because—I can't stand living by myself either . . . Because I'm lonely, that's why.

FLORENCE. I never thought of you being lonely. You have so many friends.

OLIVE. Friends go home at eleven o'clock . . . Come on, Florence, I'm proposing to you. What do you want, a Goddam ring?

FLORENCE. If you really mean it, Olive, there's a lot I can do around here. I could turn this place into something out of *Architectural Digest*.

OLIVE. Florence, *Sports Illustrated* is fine with me.

FLORENCE. I want to do something, Olive. Let me do something.

OLIVE. Alright. Tomorrow you can build me a terrace. Anything you want.

FLORENCE. (*begins to tidy up*) You'll eat like you